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Great Escapes: Gallery Owner Sienna Patti's Favorite Iconic Jewelry Trendsetters

By Brian Mastroianni



Sienna Patti's gallery in the Berkshires is called Sienna Patti Contemporary.
Bill Wright

Sienna Patti grew up around both nature and art.

Raised in the small town of Plainfield, Mass., she was surrounded by the beauty of the natural world but also galleries and museums. That was thanks to her parents—she spent her childhood

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with the work of her father, artist Thomas Patti, and her mother, Marilyn Holtz Patti, a project manager for his studio and an arts education advocate.

Despite heading to New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where she earned a degree in theater and film, it was a love of the history of ornamentation—a curiosity for how people would communicate through their adornments—that brought her to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's American Decorative Arts and Design department.

By 1998, that fascination with jewelry and its inherent storytelling power led her to start Sienna Patti Contemporary, her design and studio jewelry gallery, situated in Lenox, Mass., in the heart of the Berkshires and not too far from her childhood home.

Patti, who is in her 40s, says that when people visit her appointments-only gallery, she wants them to have the singular experience of exploring something new about themselves. For her, jewelry is a form of self expression, of telling a narrative through what you wear.

“Wearing jewelry is a personal, intense experience,” Patti says. “I want them to derive a sense of power, of joy. During these times, how do we find ways to access that power? That expression?”

Patti features artists who are both long-established as well as yet-unknown gems. While the artists she collaborates with are vastly different from one another, what unites them is innovation, using at times unexpected materials while drawing from a range of experiences and inspirations. Her artists have been found in the collections of the Met, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and the Musée de Louvre in Paris, among many more.

She uses her space to host solo and group shows and is represented at leading art fairs around the globe. She's also curated more than 150 exhibitions both in the gallery and elsewhere.

Two years ago, she launched the Sienna Patti Shop, which features both limited edition and unique custom works that are available online.

“I'm particularly drawn to pieces you can find nowhere else in the world. I want visitors to have a specialized, individualized experience—and these artists and designers all break the mold,” she adds. “I like things that are unique and strange, outside the framework of the establishment while also knowing that I work within my established background. It's a duality.”

Her Instagram account [@jewelry_swagger](#) spotlights some of her favorite trailblazers and the jewelry they've worn.

Penta caught up with Patti, who lives in Dalton, Mass., with her family, to learn five of her favorites.

Punk rockers, Joan Jett, The Runaways. “There is something so special about the way people like Joan Jett looked, something about that punk rock era. The studded jackets, these adornments that were almost like armor.”

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Frida Kahlo. “She used jewelry in such a unique, powerful way. She rocked every look, from pearls and beads to earrings to flower adornments.”

Roxanne Shanté, Mary J. Blige. “The big, gold hoops, the chains, immediately a singular statement for these women. It evoked power, swagger.”

Peggy Guggenheim. “Would wear these incredible Calder earrings, for instance, showcasing these great pieces.”

Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Madeleine Albright. “Both of these women used jewelry and adornments to make political statements on national and global stages. For example, brooches and collars were used to convey a political message.”